

ESSAY ASSESSMENT READING GUIDE

What is an essay?

*“Respondents are provided with exercises that call for them to prepare original written answers.”
(Stiggins, 2008, page 77).*

An essay is a composition on a specific theme or subject. It is generally analytic, speculative, or interpretive. The essay can vary in length but is longer than a short answer response. In an academic setting, a well-written prompt is vital for students to have a clear idea of what they are writing about and how they will be evaluated.

Used to assess: learning targets for knowledge, reasoning, performance, product development

Best for explaining: reasoning, relationships between facts, as a prerequisite for a performance or product

Learning Targets:

1. Students will know what an essay is. (fact)
2. Students will understand when it's appropriate to apply this particular assessment in their classrooms. (concept)
3. Students will be able to apply this assessment method to their teaching. (skill, introduced)
4. Students will feel comfortable using this form of assessment in their own classroom. (disposition)

Successful Essay Exercises:

English Language Arts

Choose one of the short stories we've read in this unit and write a 2-3 page essay discussing types of conflict described in the text. Examples may include man vs. self, man vs. man, man vs. god, man vs. society, etc. Include at least two examples from the text to describe each applicable conflict.

Social Studies

Throughout this unit we've explored how powerful empires fall. In a 3-4 page essay, explain what problems led to the fall of the Roman empire. Provide at least three examples and explain how they affected the eventual disintegration of this civilization.

Science

Considering what you've learned about the causes of global warming, write a 3-4 page essay proposing at least two solutions to the problem. Cite at least two credible sources to support your argument. Be sure to acknowledge and refute at least one counter-argument.

Math

In geometry we utilize various theorems to solve everyday problems. Write a 1 page essay describing how you could use the pythagorean theorem to find the height of a ladder leaning on a building. Write your answer step-by-step.

Focus Questions:

1. What is essay assessment?
2. When do we use it?
3. What is the purpose?
4. How do we use it?
5. What are pitfalls?

By Section:**SUBJECTIVE JUDGMENT**

- How do teachers avoid subjective judgement?

ASSESSMENT QUALITY

- What does Stiggins identify as the “quality control factors” that form the foundation of the appropriate use of essay assessment?

MATCHING METHOD TO TARGET

- How can an essay match fact, knowledge, or performance learning targets?

DEVELOPING ASSESSMENTS

- When planning your assessment what is important for the student? The teacher?

BARRIERS TO ACCESS

- What action can we take to prevent or remedy potential sources of problems?

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

- What exercises can you integrate into the classroom so that students can improve their metacognition about what and how they can improve in their essay responses?

Category	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Emerging (2)	Incomplete (1)
Ideas/ Writing Focus <i>This category reflects how successfully the essay addresses the prompt.</i>	Effectively communicates an <u>original</u> and <u>insightful</u> definition of heroism and uses a <u>strong example</u> to convincingly develop ideas throughout the paragraph	Presents an <u>original</u> definition of heroism and uses an <u>example</u> to develop ideas	Presents an uninspired definition of heroism and ineffectively uses an example to develop ideas	The concept of heroism is undefined, simplistic, and/or unclear
Organization <i>This category reflects how effectively the organization of the essay reinforces ideas.</i>	Effectively leads with a <u>hook</u> and establishes a <u>clear and developed structure that contributes to the argument</u>	Uses a <u>hook</u> and presents a <u>developed</u> paragraph with a <u>clear controlling idea</u>	Underdeveloped and/or unfocused paragraph	Paragraph lacks a controlling idea
Diction <i>This category reflects how effectively the writer uses language to communicate ideas.</i>	<u>Accurately uses strong and varied diction</u> to clearly define heroism	<u>Accurately uses varied diction</u> to define heroism	Uses diction that is at times simplistic, vague, and/or repetitive	Diction is unclear or inappropriate for the task and audience
Syntax and Conventions <i>This category reflects how well the writer follows rules of standard written English.</i>	Demonstrates <u>technical command</u> of conventions of Standard English; writing is virtually <u>error free</u>	<u>General command</u> of conventions; <u>minor errors</u> in punctuation, grammar, capitalization, or spelling do not interfere with meaning	Limited command of conventions; errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, or spelling interfere with meaning	Writing contains significant errors that are beyond distracting and make the paragraph difficult to follow

Present!

1. Write learning targets and agenda on the board
2. What is an essay?
 - a. Give definition
3. When and when not to use essay? Strengths and weaknesses - powerpoint - Jo - 5 minutes
 - a. Brainstorm individually how YOU would use an essay in your class
 - b. Discuss as a table, then share out numbered heads
4. How do you develop your assessment? - powerpoint - Claire - 3 minutes
5. Let's Asses - Jason and Robin - 10 minutes
 - a. Students read essay and assess it, see what grade everyone gives and tally up
 - b. Present four points on "poor-quality" scoring and importance of rubrics
 - c. Distribute handouts, direct all to rubric sample, share actual rubric-graded score
6. Wrap up - Summer
 - a. Powerpoint: backwards learning, student involvement
 - b. Fist of 5 - how comfy do you feel using these? Reservations?
 - c. Check in with everyone
7. Kahoot review - Brontë

Common themes in other handouts from past years:

I thought this format was bomb, we could talk about creating something similar but with guiding questions and maybe tips?

Page #	Tip
130	Make sure that you read those four major concepts that are in red. These are the BIG IDEAS.
131	Pay close attention to those 5 bullet points. You don't you don't want to make these mistakes.
132-134	These pages are an example of a professor's essay assessment. It is a case study you can read. But look at figure 6.2. That is a long and in-depth question, this is what you want too.
135	When is the right time to use an essay assessment? What do you think?
136	Consistency, consistency, consistency. Who is responsible for quality control? You are. Read this one, because its on you.
137-140	If there was a most important part, it may be this one. The essay method must match your target. What are do you really want from your students? Read once and repeat!
140	Table 6.1, HECKA helpful!
141-142	Basically, plan it out. Remember that.
143	The three exercises on this page are really helpful. It is a really great breakdown on how to make an essay question.
144	Reflection, you have to do it for everything. One great suggestion here, try to answer your own essay question. If you can't answer it, your students won't be able to either!
145	Need a quick table, look at 6.3.
146-151	This is the meat of it. How do you score these questions that your students just had to endure...enjoy. Well, all of your answers are on these pages. You will just have to read them. If you remember nothing else, remember DO NOT USE FLOATING STANDARDS!

- page numbers for each section/question
- figure 6.6 good for student-involved essay involvement
- matching methods to target info

Common questions

- When does it make sense to use essay as an assessment? (context, function, time)
- What is required to successfully assess via essays?
- What are barriers to effective use?
- How can essay assessments work in different content areas?
- Student involvement – what are benefits of involving students as partners in assessment?

Common examples

- ELA – essay with prompt
- S.S. – analyze a primary document and explain about such-and-such concept from it
- Science – lab report
- Geometry – golden ratio, talk about use in the world around us (define proportion in mathematical terms, describe where it's found in nature, how it's used by artists, etc)

Some included a sample rubric for grading the essay